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ABSTRACT

This report on the process by which a university librarian is selected is based on interviews with key participants in searches for library directors at five medium to large universities, each of which had selected a new university librarian within the two years prior to the survey. It was found that the five universities--one private, one state-related, one member of a statewide university system, and two state universities (one rural and one urban)--had a number of common characteristics which contributed to a successful search, including relative openness with respect to the process, a clear understanding of affirmative action guidelines, a commitment to the library by academic officers, and interest from the three major constituent groups, i.e., librarians, faculty, and administrators. Several critical factors in the search process that were common to the searches were also found: (1) careful attention to the composition of the search committee; (2) management of group dynamics within the search committee; (3) accurate representation of the university to the candidates; (4) accurate knowledge on the part of the committee of the type of individual desired by academic officers; and (5) communication of the future direction of the university from academic officers to all involved in the search. The critical role of outsiders in searches, as well as the necessity for an "assertive" search are also considered. Copies of the interview questionnaire and the introductory cover letter are appended. (60 references) (Author/EW)

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SELECTION OF THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN

AN OMS OCCASIONAL PAPER

FEBRUARY 1988

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SELECTION OF THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN

AN OMS OCCASIONAL PAPER

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ABSTRACT

SELECTION OF THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN. Dr. Ruth J. Person and Dr. George C. Newman. Washington, DC: Office of Management Studies, Association of Research Libraries. OMS Occasional Paper #13. February 1988.

Within the context of the administrative selection process, the search for a university librarian takes on a particular significance in higher education. The appointment of a new director of libraries is recognized on most campuses as a decision affecting all academic disciplines. Because the university librarian directs a costly operation that is vital to both instruction and research whose constituencies are also competitors in the division of the budgetary pie, the appointment of this individual may be more complex than that of many deans or directors of academic or other support units.

Selection of the University Librarian provides useful observations, conclusions, and common themes for a successful search, based on research funded by the Council on Library Resources. The authors conducted extensive interviews involving key participants in searches for library directors at five large universities. Those interviewed included university administrators, faculty, library staff, and students. The institutions selected for study consisted of both public and private universities which had hired a library director within the past two years.

After speculating on problems of searches and reviewing learnings from the literature, the authors discuss their interview findings. The five universities in the study had a number of common characteristics which appeared to contribute to a successful search. These included (1) relative openness with respect to the process, (2) a clear understanding of the process with respect to affirmative action guidelines, (3) a commitment to the library by academic officers, and (4) interest from the three major constituent groups --librarians, faculty, and administrators.

The paper addresses in some depth key issues and decisions points regarding the search process itself, committees and their roles, the

acceptable applicant pool, affirmative action, and the "select list" and final candidate. Among their conclusions, authors point to certain key critical factors common to the searches studied:

Careful attention to the composition of the search committee

Management of group dynamics within the search committee

Accurate representation of the university to attract only candidates who are truly interested in addressing the university's problems and prospects

Accurate knowledge on the part of the search committee of the type of individual academic officers desire -- e.g., a good manager, a scholar, a team player

Communication of the direction the institution will be taking in the future from academic officers to all involved in the search

The critical role of outsiders in searches, as well as the necessity for an "assertive" search, are explored. The paper is supported with footnotes, a bibliography, and appendices illustrating the study's methodology and questionnaire.

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* * *

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INTRODUCTION

In writing about academic careers, Kathryn Moore notes that administrative vacancies in higher education are often filled by a "prolonged, expensive, often frantic search," and that higher education does not tend to groom its future leaders, particularly within individual institutions, the way business organizations do.[1] This lack of grooming forces many institutions to look outside themselves for likely candidates for administrative posts, which often requires extensive searches. If the number of advertisements in the Chronicle of Higher Education is any indication, literally hundreds of these searches are conducted each year to fill positions of administrative responsibility in higher education. Because these searches often involve a dozen or more individuals on any one campus at any one time, the amount of campus time devoted each year to the selection process is considerable.

The time involvement in the search process is compounded by the opportunity for errors. Often, advertisements in academic journals carry the information "search reopened," suggesting that some difficulty has arisen with the original search process. Yet in the late 1980's, a "steady state" era for higher education, colleges and universities have far less tolerance for mistakes in the employment of administrators[2] than ever before, while requiring greater competence from those dealing with the increasing complexities of administration.

The importance of the selection process in higher education administration has been increasingly emphasized in the past several years, as a result of the growing awareness of the need for more rigorous selection of academic administrators. Higher education literature of the past five years reflects a marked increase in reports, research, and discussions relating to the search process. A series of dialogues and articles in the AAHE Bulletin during 1984 articulated the constraints and problems related to the search process in higher education. The American Association for Higher Education is currently developing a handbook for members of college and university search committees which will enhance institutional abilities to conduct fruitful searches.[3] Further, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities has conducted a series of workshops on "Understanding the Administrative Search" for administrators at all levels of higher education.

Within the context of the administrative selection process, the search for a university librarian takes on a particular significance in higher education. The appointment of a new director of libraries is recognized on most campuses as a decision affecting all academic disciplines. Because the university librarian directs a costly operation that is vital to both instruction and research whose constituencies are also competitors in the division of the budgetary pie, the appointment of an individual whose operational area of responsibility affects all areas of the academic enterprise may thus be more complex than that of many deans or directors of academic or other support units.

Some of the possible problems related to administrative searches have recently been identified in the literature. These include lack of appropriate means for identifying

candidates, unavailability of mechanisms for accurate evaluation, and the like. Such problems seem to be exacerbated by the complexity of the library director search. For example, unlike search committees for deans and department chairs, in which faculty members from the affected school, college, or department play key roles, seldom does the search for a director of libraries seem to be left to a committee composed of library staff members exclusively. Instead, the committee may represent a variety of campus constituencies.

Besides a presumed interest in the welfare of the library, what do members of such a search committee have most in common? "Lack of experience" in selecting an administrator, particularly for a specialized post, may be one answer to this question. While personnel officers may play vital roles in selecting individuals for lesser posts, and faculty and staff may play a role in the selection of their peers, administrative officers in the academic environment are often chosen by relative amateurs. Rarely does an individual have the opportunity to serve on more than one or two search committees for a library director or other administrator; keeping in mind the typical tenure of a university president, rarely does he or she have occasion to appoint more than one or two library directors.

Not only might the majority of the membership of the search committee lack specific experience, but they may also have little personal knowledge of the organizational complexity of large research libraries. Nor do they have personal acquaintance with a variety of academic library directors of national reputation to whom they can refer for expert advice and nominations. While faculty members chosen to serve on such a committee are usually users of the university library, their view of its operation may be a biased one, related to their own particular research interests (compare, for example, the possible view of the chemist toward library service with that of the historian). Student members of a university search committee may quickly discover the severe limitation of their own knowledge and experience, and, in the end, if their interest can be sustained, may contribute little to the process except their own personal reactions to candidates brought for interviews. If the search committee includes one or more librarians, these individuals may be called upon to educate the committee as a whole and also to obtain and share professional judgement regarding applicants -- or, in the opposite extreme, they may be completely ignored or overruled by their committee colleagues.

Thus, the problems related to the selection of a new university library director are many and varied. Assuming that experience has value, even when vicariously acquired, where may a university president or a member of a newly-formed search committee turn to learn of the recent experience of other search committees in peer institutions? The answer to this question, at present, is "almost nowhere." What is lacking is information on how the search process functions from the institutional viewpoint, whether this process is responding to the changing needs of research libraries in the 1980's and whether the process is successful in providing the kind of leadership needed for academic libraries in the future.

LEARNINGS FROM THE LITERATURE

While the literature of higher education has become increasingly detailed in its reporting of the problems associated with academic searches, library literature contains relatively few current, comprehensive references to this activity, although the selection of a library director is a major administrative decision in universities. The article entitled "University Library Search and Screen Committees" by Harvey and Parr[4] is primarily concerned with filling staff positions. A study by Metz on "Administrative Succession in the Academic Library"[5] examines issues such as the external versus internal candidate and the impact of female candidates for library directorships. The use of committees in the search process is also discussed by Fisher.[6]

A more recent study by Maag[7] provides a new critical perspective on the selection of a library director, albeit from the candidate's point of view. Maag surveyed newly-appointed directors of libraries in 4-year colleges and universities and concluded that the selection process is less than a satisfying and constructive one for most candidates. Although one would think that careful planning and thoughtful consideration of the position and an in-depth investigation of final candidates would take place, Maag's study suggests otherwise. This author concludes his research with a series of recommendations, including longer on-campus visits, interviewers who are more informed about academic librarianship, and inclusion of more library staff in the selection process.

Related professional literature focuses upon the role of the library director in the institution or on the characteristics of past and present directors. Such literature, although only indirectly related to the selection process, can help to clarify requisite characteristics for future library directors. It can also help to identify the context into which potential applicants for director positions are placed when they pursue such jobs.

McAnally and Downs' study of the "changing role" of the university library director emphasizes that, because of a variety of changes in higher education and in university libraries, persons holding directorships have chosen shorter appointments. Their research infers that the position of university librarian has become ambiguous and untenable for some; it would also suggest the need for greater definition in the selection process.[8]

In Lee's research on the role of the academic library director, the author concludes that the academic library director sees him- or herself in the middle on many issues and that the position of library director has changed in recent years because of the emergence of new responsibilities and institutional expectancies. Thus the library director must carefully maintain a position between the external and internal demands of the post.[9] These conclusions are verified by Paul Metz,[10] who suggests that the typical director in both small and large libraries concentrates a majority of the working day on internal library matters rather than external issues which could have a greater long-range effect on the function and position of the library within the academic community. The role of the university librarian and the relationship

of the director with the university as well as with external agencies could have a great impact in the future in terms of solving the problems related to resources, staffing, and financial constraints now facing the internal maintenance of the library system.

Neville examined the environment of libraries that are members of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) and characterized these institutions as going through a "mid-life transition." According to Neville, this period of turmoil and ambiguity requires new types of administrative leadership and management styles to monitor a smooth transition. This new leadership requires innovation in a period of institutional and financial retrenchment.[11] The importance of managing this innovation to create economic and social change in academic libraries in the future will be a significant variable, according to Drake. She concludes that in order to successfully confront the future, libraries will require committed and enthusiastic leaders capable of dealing with complex problems on several fronts, within as well as outside the library, and implementing innovation where it is deemed appropriate.[12]

The most extensive current information about the academic library environment comes from DePew and Allison's comparison of 1976 and 1981 data relating to the role of the academic library director and the changing power structure in academic libraries. DePew and Allison's data indicate a greater span of control among university library directors in 1981 over 1976, and a widening in the gap between university librarians and the central focus of academic authority (i.e., the president and/or chief academic officer). Further, they report that of all the types of academic libraries, university library directors have the greatest turnover (an increase of 57.9 percent between 1976 and 1981).[13]

*[**Editor's Note:** Although the percentage of increase cited implies significant turnover, in fact, turnover is quite low -- e.g., with a universe of 100 directors, a change from 5 to 8 turnovers in a year is not significant. See the SPEC Kit on Search Procedures for University Library Administrators.]*

Another area which has been covered in the library literature deals with the characteristics of library directors. Research compiled by Cohn on ARL directors between 1933 and 1973 offers retrospective insight into the type of university librarian that has historically been selected. According to Cohn, more recent ARL library directors generally entered the profession at a relatively young age but were spending more time in the profession before obtaining a directorship.[14] Between 1933 and 1973 the typical university librarian at ARL libraries tended to be an individual with extensive prior experience, male, in the mid-to-upper 40's, and recruited from a similar institution. The university librarians who left these posts gravitated to teaching positions.

The Cohn article is an attempt to analyze characteristics of ARL-type librarians rather than to discuss or analyze the implications of this historical data on the role of the university librarian. Research by Parsons[15] that compared the characteristics of ARL directors in 1958 with those in 1973 to some degree verified McAnally and Downs' conclusions regarding shorter appointments due to new financial, political, and academic issues that

have changed the role of the university librarian. Furthermore, the Parsons study indicated that demographic characteristics for ARL directors for 1958 and 1973 did not vary to any significant degree compared to Cohn's sample. This information suggests that, despite new demands on the role of the university librarian, a different type of librarian did not emerge in this time period.

DePew and Allison's data suggest that between 1976 and 1981, such individuals as described by Cohn and Parsons were finding the library directorship increasingly complex, risky, and difficult.[16] Further, Karr's comparison of ARL directors between 1966 and 1981 suggests that they had a far greater grounding in library science education in 1981 than in 1966, and that the "the genteel, scholarly even dilettantish directors of the past are yielding to career-minded managers, administrators, and technicians."[17]

QUESTIONS FOR EXAMINATION

Little has been reported regarding the way in which the typical search committee for a university library director is established. Who actually chooses the membership -- the president, the vice-president for academic affairs, the board of trustees? What factors are generally taken into account in choosing individuals to serve on the search committee? Is an attempt made to achieve broad faculty representation? How frequently does an already-existing library committee serve as the search committee, and what is that committee's role if it does not conduct the search? To what degree do members of the library staff tend to serve on the search committee and how are those individuals chosen?

Do library members of the search committee serve a particular function that differs from other members? Does the possession of faculty status by the library staff affect their representation and role? What is the effect of a faculty and/or library union on the role of the search committee? What is the nature of the charge given to the search committee, including restrictions with regard to candidates' qualifications (possession of a degree in library science, the doctorate, professional experience, maximum age, etc.)?

There also appears to be some confusion in the distinction between "searching" and "screening." The terms are sometimes used interchangeably and sometimes together. Does the search committee select the final candidate or are its members expected to only review possible candidates and make recommendations? Is the typical search committee expected to submit a list of qualified candidates in ranked or unranked order, and what is the minimum number? Is the president or provost the person who makes the final decision, or is the decision reached jointly between the administration, the university library, and search committee? What role does the outgoing director play in the process? To what degree are consultants or other outsiders used? Have fair employment and affirmative action programs in the past several years had a specific effect on the search process?

In the final analysis, how satisfied are the members of search committees with their accomplishment? Would they conduct their search differently now that they have been through the process once? What advice would they give to another search committee based on their experience? How satisfied were they with the candidates that they reviewed and interviewed? Where enough time has elapsed to evaluate the individual finally appointed, how nearly does he/she appear to be living up to expectations?

STUDYING THE SEARCH PROCESS

In order to address the above questions, a study was developed to examine the selection process for university library directors. Because the selection process involves very sensitive issues and personalities and because no appropriate survey instrument exists, research was conducted through a series of site interviews with the participants in the search and selection process at a self-selected group of five medium to large universities. Through this extensive interview process involving the key participants in the selection process -- university administrators, faculty, library staff, and students -- the study attempted to determine the impact and the focus of the search and selection process in research universities.

A letter of introduction and request for participation was sent to research universities that had selected a new university librarian during the past two years before the study began as well as during the time the study was being conducted (see Appendix A). The extensive nature of the interviews limited the study to a small number of universities that would serve as a representative sample of the larger universe of academic research university libraries which have relatively similar requirements for a university librarian.

Five universities agreed to become interview sites, representing one private, one state-related, one member of a statewide university system, and two state universities (one rural and one urban) that are independent of any statewide system. The five sites were distributed geographically throughout the country (West Coast, West, Midwest, South, and Northeast). All were medium to large universities in terms of enrollment, with a diversity of academic programs ranging from the baccalaureate degree to the doctorate, and a wide range of research concentrations.

The researchers used a model constructed from the literature to develop the study questions and to provide guidance for interviews. As represented in the literature, typically, the search process begins with the appointment of a search committee. The individuals chosen tend to represent varied campus interests. Faculty members from a variety of disciplines, usually of scholarly distinction and known for their personal interest in the library, predominate; one or two students and a representative or two from the library staff usually round out the committee. A brief charge, including an admonition to keep affirmative action in mind, is customarily relayed to the search committee by the president, with instructions to produce a slate of qualified candidates by a given date. A budget, with provisions for campus interviews, may be provided. Job requirements are outlined, advertisements are placed, and the review of applicants who respond is then undertaken. Candidates are invited to campus for interviews, and a decision is made regarding a final choice.

Based on this model, the researchers constructed and tested a questionnaire (see Appendix B). One researcher visited each campus for approximately a two-day interval to interview individuals involved in the search process. Depending on the constraints of time, availability, and cooperation, the following individuals were interviewed at each site: (1) university

president/chancellor, (2) provost/vice-president of academic affairs, (3) chairperson of the search committee, (4) members of the search committee, (5) chairperson of the library committee, and (6) affirmative action officer.

In addition, the researchers examined written materials related to the search provided by university officials and search committee chairs. This generally included copies of advertisements and position descriptions, mission statements for the university, descriptions of the library and its work, affirmative action records, lists of the candidates and their present locations, names of individuals who participated in the search process, and data about the ranking and categorization of candidates.

The willing participants all became representatives of ultimately successful and satisfactory search processes. In fact, the individuals interviewed for this research study were open about not only the process itself but also about attitudes and administrative data concerning the search. Not only were these institutions willing participants, from the presidential level to the most junior member of a search committee, but several academic officers in particular indicated that discussing the search process after the fact allowed them to reflect both on the outcomes of that particular event and about how they might improve future searches.

COMMON THEMES FOR A SUCCESSFUL SEARCH

The five universities in this study had a number of common characteristics which appeared to contribute to a successful search. These included:

* Relative openness with respect to the process and its various elements,

* A clear understanding of the process with respect to affirmative action guidelines,

* A commitment to the library by academic officers, and

* Interest from the three major constituent groups on most campuses--librarians, faculty, and administrators.

Not all facets of each search process were totally satisfactory, of course, and certainly divisions of opinion about candidates existed. On at least two occasions, the chief executive officer selected a different individual than was ranked first by the search committee or favored by the library staff. In another instance, the search process had to be extended significantly when final negotiations with a candidate were unsuccessful. Yet, on an overall basis, the final outcome of the search process -- a candidate who had, after several months elapsed, become an accepted and contributing member of the university administrative staff -- was satisfactory at all five sites.

The Search Process

In general, the major elements of the search process that were outlined earlier in this paper remained relatively comparable among the five universities. A number of factors seem to account for this relative standardization:

* The presence of affirmative action guidelines and practices and an acceptance of these as a means of "regularizing" at least the process elements of a search in order to collect comparable data about candidates and ensure equal treatment of those individuals involved in the search;

* The experience of a substantial number of faculty members on search committees within their own disciplines as well as for administrative positions (such as Dean searches);

* A clear mandate for action and a decision timetable from administrative officers of each university (as opposed to indecision about the initiation of a search or lack of clarity about the potential role of the library in the university); and

* The administrative support available for each part of the process.

While the search process itself remained relatively standard in terms of the major elements, differences were more readily apparent in the interpretation of each part of the process. These differences included variety in terms of the size of search committees, the types of individuals and the constituencies they represented on the search committees, and the type of individual desired for the final candidate (particularly in terms of personal characteristics and organizational fit).

Differences in the search process seemed largely unrelated to size of institution, type of institution (private/public), institutional mission, or geography. Rather, the unique characteristics, "self-perception" and culture of each organization were more likely to shape the interpretation of the search process and its outcome. These perceptions related to the nature of the institution and its history, its future mission and goals as defined by present constituents, the level of expressed interest in the university library as a fundamental part of the academic enterprise, the interest in the university librarian as a potential member of an administration team, and concern with the contribution a newcomer could make toward making the university a better place for the future.

Nearly all individuals interviewed identified the differences in process as being related to the unique combination of constituencies in each organization. Academic administrators in particular expressed their desire to have found an individual who would serve as a catalyst for change; in each case, however, the change desired was different, reflecting future directions of each university and the past position of the library. These desired changes included enhanced non-traditional services after a long period of traditional service under the same director; incorporation of significant new technologies; attention to the enhancement of the research status of the university; emphasis on outside support; and staff reorganization.

Committees and Their Roles

Search committees are a relatively recent phenomenon in higher education. All of the universities used the committee format as the major means of developing a list of final candidates for the university librarian's position; chief academic officers made the final selection of the successful candidate. Search committees in this study included an average of 9 members.

While the composition of these committees varied in terms of academic disciplines and university constituencies represented, the usual array of members included faculty from a variety of disciplines in the arts and sciences as well as professional programs (as well as a balance representing the faculty governance structure), several members of the library staff (usually a support staff member and a professional librarians, one of whom represented the staff association and/or collective bargaining unit, if appropriate), and students (usually a graduate and an undergraduate). In one case, a representative from a "sister" state institution also served as a member. All of the institutions seemed to understand clearly the need to represent these various constituencies that make up a university environment, and the appointing officer (usually the president or academic vice-president) went to great lengths to ensure adequate representation.

Each committee had a chair (generally a faculty member) who had administrative support provided most often by the academic vice-president's office for correspondence with candidates. In general, the chair was responsible for overall coordination of the process in terms of scheduling meetings, setting and keeping to agendas and decision timetables, and managing the movement of information in candidate files; in general, the chair also arranged the

scheduling of final candidate appearances on campus. Committee members were expected to participate fully in the development of a position description and advertising information, reviewing of candidate files, selection of finalists, and visitation with final candidates on campus.

In some personnel selection processes, particularly in the civil service sector, personnel staff members often conduct preliminary screening of applicant files to determine minimal compliance with qualification statements. While clerical and support personnel often assisted with the organization of candidate files, screening was clearly the purview of the search committees in this study. This activity required extensive time commitments on the part of members, since the average number of applicants for the five universities was 53, with the range being from 20 to 65. Committee members were expected to have evaluative statements or ratings on each candidate available for committee meetings.

In higher education organizations, as well as in many other environments, committee assignments are sometimes viewed as burdensome and unproductive uses of time, and are thus taken on reluctantly. The committee members interviewed for this study, however, largely viewed the assignment of selecting a new university librarian as an opportunity to provide a valuable service to the university. Moreover, they believed the opportunity to share in academic decision making to be genuine, and not merely an exercise in participative futility.

While it might seem that academic officers have preconceived ideas about the final outcome of the search process, such problems did not appear to have arisen at these five sites. One contributing factor may have been the fact that there were almost no viable internal candidates for the position. The perception of the university librarian's vacant position as a "blank slate" upon which to write as well as a clear mandate from each of the presidents and their academic vice-presidents to select an individual who could help the university achieve its educational and service aims and enhance its research capabilities seemed to create a particular spirit of mission in the committees.

The Acceptable Applicant Pool

Once organizational politics have been considered in forming a search committee and writing a job description, perhaps the most difficult time begins for a search committee -- the waiting period, as applicants respond to advertisements and initial contacts.

The avenues for publicizing vacant academic library positions have become fairly standardized over the past decade, and usually include the placement of written advertisements in the Chronicle of Higher Education, College and Research Libraries News and other major library publications, the listing of positions on job "hotlines;" the placement of notices with library education programs for inclusion in placement bulletins; and often the participation in the American Library Association's placement service if the timing of the search coincides with an ALA conference. While all of the universities expressed satisfaction with their choice of a final candidate pool and the final selection of a candidate, for most, there were difficult moments,

centering primarily around the initial response to advertisements.

There are several possible explanations for the difficulties encountered in generating an acceptable applicant response. A number of interviewees expressed difficulty with constructing a printed advertisement which conveyed a real sense of the mission of the university; it was seen as particularly hard to convey intentions about new directions that may differ from past practices. It often remained for the search committee and other members of the university community to convey or interpret the university's direction to potential candidates or to those people who could provide names of potential candidates. In some cases, individuals applied for positions who believed that they understood the present status and conditions of a particular university; because they were not "insiders," they may not have understood that the university wished to move in a direction for which they were not suited. Conversely, other individuals may have felt constrained from applying for positions based on this same information -- that they understood the present state of the university and felt that it had little to offer them or that they have little to offer it, when in fact the intended change in direction would have offered them considerable challenge.

Quite typical, then, was the disappointment expressed regarding the quality of applicants to initial advertisements. The search for acceptable candidates at the five sites took on a more proactive stance after applicants began to respond to initial printed advertisements, when it was recognized that additional effort would need to be made to find an acceptable group of candidates.

Two kinds of expectations may also have worked against the creation of a viable applicant pool. First, when confronted with the knowledge conveyed by such data as that identified by DePew and Allison about turnover, change, and high risk in academic library directorships, many individuals may be wary of taking positions which suggest unacceptable levels of such risk without commensurate reward. Second, search committees at the outset seem to have a tendency to look for "someone who walks on water, makes bread and fish, and comes with a wheelbarrow full of money;"[18] in other words, to have an unrealistic expectation of the nature of candidate qualifications for academic administrative jobs.

In most cases, library personnel included on search committees were not able to be particularly helpful in identifying suitable candidates, although fellow committee members expected the contrary. Their knowledge of potential candidates, other than major figures in librarianship who are known to almost all academic librarians, was limited. While faculty members from various disciplines often know the major or "up-and-coming" individuals in their field, the academic library environment seems far more hierarchical. Thus, since library director search committees obviously did not include the outgoing director or even an assistant director, the knowledge base of the library personnel on the committee (such as heads of reference, support staff, non-managerial professionals) was not the same as for those already involved in upper-level library management. The stratification of librarianship by managerial level thus tended to work against identifying potential candidates by using the library representatives on the search committee as resources.

Interestingly, it was academic officers who tended to seek solicitations from third parties, using whatever resources were at their disposal, including contacts at other universities, members of the board of trustees, library directors and library science deans known from prior employment experiences, and the like. In fact, at the institutions surveyed, academic vice-presidents and other administrators were more likely to be able to identify potential applicants either because of direct knowledge or through secondary sources who were a part of their own "network." Provosts and presidents have had multi-faceted careers in higher education, have probably served at several institutions, and thus have come to know a variety of librarians. They may, for example, have been junior professors and served on committees with librarians; they may have been deans and been members of an academic council with the library director of their campus.

Affirmative Action

The role of the affirmative action officer differed in each university visited. For the most part, these university representatives served primarily as ensurers of compliance with regulations and processes, and as available sources of information as deemed necessary by the committee chair. While these officers all expressed willingness to serve in a more active capacity if necessary, their general view was that the individuals involved in the search were knowledgeable about affirmative action processes and concerns. They felt that in general, library-related searches had the reputation of being conducted with a positive attitude toward affirmative action in their respective universities.

This "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" attitude allowed the search process to move with reasonable speed; detailed instructions and/or intervention by the affirmative action officer simply were not necessary. Most officers cited the searches as being "exemplary;" indeed, if one looks simply at the composition of both the initial and final candidate pools, this is certainly true. If one looks at the end result of the search process as a judgement of affirmative action success, however, the data are not as supportive. While at least four of the universities had female applicants as a part of the "best and final" pool of choices presented to academic officers, only one university selected a female director, and no minority group members were chosen as university librarian.

The "Select List" and the Final Candidate

In the final analysis, all of the universities had an excellent pool of applicants from which to form a "select list" of three to five individuals from whom a final choice could be made by the provost with the consent of the president, or by the president him/herself. Applicants included in the initial pool represented a wide spectrum of credentials, both acceptable and unacceptable. These included recent MLS graduates with little experience, individuals who were serving currently as associate/assistant directors or heads of libraries at smaller or less research-oriented universities, and individuals who had a variety of managerial and administrative experience outside the university environment (including two and four year colleges, special libraries and information centers,

government agencies, and private consulting firms).

The selection of a final pool of applicants to be invited for campus visits reflected the recent comments in the Chronicle of Higher Education concerning the few "outsiders" to the academic world who are chosen for administrative posts.[19] The individuals in the final choice pool were associate/assistant directors, held major staff positions, or were already library directors in the university or research library environment. Other individuals who may have had excellent capabilities as managers from, for example, a large and complex two-year college environment or a government staff position with extensive administrative requirements were not considered as viable final choices.

The qualifications of the "short list" of candidates as well as the finalists attest to the desirability of particular characteristics for the academic library director's job: visibility in the professional community, academic credentials (MLS, advanced graduate work desirable but generally not a requirement), direct and significant experience in academic library management, and the elusive qualities that would allow the individual to move the library forward both as a leader and as part of the larger administrative team. In this sense, the new library director was expected to function as a middle manager--balancing the needs of the larger organization with the unit within it that he/she leads.

Generally, two or three finalists were invited to campus for interviews, with a final choice being invited a second time for negotiation. Although the candidate is sometimes viewed as the "seller" and the organization as the "buyer" in this scenario, the organizations in this study felt that they must sell themselves to potential candidates whom they wished to attract, particularly those whom they had actively solicited. Activities undertaken during these visits reflected those reported in the higher education literature; that is, interviews with the search committee, major administrative officers, potential administrative colleagues (such as deans and directors), and library staff. Also generally included were a presentation by the candidate and a tour of the local area, as well as numerous luncheons and dinners. For the most part, interviewees expressed satisfaction with this part of the process in terms of its usefulness in viewing the capabilities of the candidate.

The final selection process and decision making activity was a delicate balancing act between organizational/administrative/unit desires and willingness to offer certain incentives, and the personal and professional needs of candidates. There were stories of candidates who removed their names from the short list, who turned down offers, and who accepted an offer and then changed their minds.

CONCLUSIONS

While it is difficult to generalize from five case studies about the universe of search process experiences, it is possible to make general observations that should be helpful to institutions searching for a library director.

The consensus of individuals interviewed was that the search process, regardless of its pitfalls, yielded a final candidate who was not only acceptable to all parties, but who was in fact the most appropriate person for the institution at that particular moment in its history. The selection process in all cases reflected concerns for institutional politics; university mission and goals; organizational climate and culture; and human, technological and fiscal constraints on the institution.

Many variables influence both the final selection of a candidate and that candidate's own decisions with respect to the acceptance of a position. Certain key "critical factors" do, however, seem to be common to the searches studied:

* Careful attention to the composition of the search committee

* The management of group dynamics (especially by the chair) within the search committee

* The accurate representation of the university so that only candidates who are truly interested in addressing the university's problems and prospects will apply

* Accurate knowledge on the part of the search committee of the type of individual academic officers desire for the university librarian -- a good manager, a scholar, a team player

* A communication of the direction the institution will be taking in the future from academic officers to all involved in the search

The Critical Role of Outsiders

These five searches serve as a reminder of the increasingly critical role "outsiders" (that is, non-librarians) play in the library and the increased number of levels in the university hierarchy that have placed the library in a different organizational position than in the past.

The academic library community often discusses the need for increasing the visibility and the understanding of centrality of the academic library within both faculty and administration, as well as the need for constant encouragement of faculty to use library resources and services for their research, students/classwork, and scholarly communication. Every new generation of college students also affords yet another opportunity to acquaint the often uninitiated into the information age via library instruction and use.

Often a university library is the "silent partner" in the academic enterprise -- important, but sometimes overlooked. The authors were reminded of the absolute critical nature and centrality of the library to the life of the university at the five sites visited. In a unit the size of the library, one might expect that a search would be

influenced largely by internal pressure groups and the wishes of the library staff. The fact that "outsiders" play such an enormous role in deciding the leadership of the library, while perhaps negative from the perspective of some library staff members, is actually a positive contribution to the centrality of the library and a critical factor in demonstrating the importance of the library on the campus.

The search processes examined here demonstrate a particular reason for the need for greater contacts of faculty and administrators with the library community in the academic environment. If the pattern of recruitment of academic library directors continues as suggested here -- that is, applicants are advertised for but also unofficially sought and screened through others than the library staff, then academic officers must continue to be exposed to the library portion of the academic enterprise in greater depth, not so they can become experts, but so that they can develop adequate networks necessary for recruitment in this environment.

Critical to the searches studied were the input and ultimate decision-making power of the president/chancellor and provost/academic vice-president. These individuals did not concern themselves with the mechanics of the search process except to provide necessary secretarial and clerical support. They, however, played key roles at four particular points in the process: (1) the initiation of the search process, with a charge to the committee as to what was to be accomplished, (2) the recruitment of individuals who became part of the applicant pool, (3) the delineation of characteristics desired in the final candidate, and (4) the final selection of the candidate who was to become the university librarian.

The Assertive Search

Judging from the most recent discussion of the search process in the Chronicle of Higher Education,[20] academics are becoming more assertive in undertaking search processes in order to secure good leadership in the face of institutional change. This assertiveness includes the increased use of executive search firms for the recruitment of academic officers, and often the pursuit of individuals who are not applicants for a position.

Although no such approach was used in the search processes studied, nor has one been identified in the library literature, it nevertheless would appear that some kind of enhancement of the library director search process would have been useful to the committees at the institutions represented. In fact, in spite of the overall success of the recruitment effort in terms of the quality of final candidates, a number of interviewees cited the lack of assertiveness on the part of the committee as the single biggest weakness in the search process.

Numerous individuals commented that had universities somewhere to turn to receive assistance in identifying outstanding candidates, or at least had they a better understanding of the dynamics of the academic library professional community in terms of potential available candidates, they would have been in a better position to construct an outstanding applicant pool earlier on. Given that four of the five final candidates had previously served at the Assistant/Associate Director level and that one had served as a director

at a smaller institution, even the availability of a current list of such individuals from whom to solicit possible candidacy might have been helpful.

Earlier in this paper, it was noted that in the past, higher education institutions did not appear to be grooming potential successors for administrative positions. In 1986, however, Rodman and Dingerson note that not only do internal candidates for academic dean and assistant/associate chief academic officer positions have a greater likelihood of being interviewed for positions but also have a much higher probability of filling such positions.[21] However, in the five searches studied, current library staff members were rarely considered as viable candidates or included in a final "short list."

Data from Rodman and Dingerson suggest that internal grooming processes can be useful for the development of applicant pools. Further, developmental programs such as the ACE National Identification Program for Women in Higher Education serve as a model for the identification of potential candidates for administrative positions. Librarianship, unfortunately, appears to have neither external models for the identification of administrators that are as far-reaching as the ACE program, nor the internal processes within many libraries that promote the development to any great extent of individuals for upward career progression to the position of director. The difficulties indicated by this study involved in identifying outstanding candidates and the lack of internal choices for the applicant pool suggest that the library community would do well to promote the development of an identification program for future library directors that is as widespread and far-reaching as the ACE program. Further, research universities should give greater attention to the development of managers in libraries below the rank of director in order to provide a greater pool of potential applicants in the future.

Questions for Future Study

This study did not specifically address the issues facing academic libraries and how they affect the choice of library leadership, nor did it address the specifics of leadership qualifications. There is usually a great amount of information available on the types of academic, budgetary, management and other issues that a university, its library, and a new university librarian will face. But how do these issues affect the search and selection of a new university librarian? In light of these issues, are large research university libraries choosing individuals today with the same leadership, educational qualifications, experience, sex, and background as previous appointments? Are there characteristics of candidates and dimensions associated with the position of university librarian that specifically impact on the search, screen and selection processes, and to what degree can these same concerns be identified at different types of universities?

These questions, as well as those that deal with the applicant pool and the input of outsiders in the search process, must be studied in order to provide a truly comprehensive view of a complex administrative process that has far-reaching consequences for higher education.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Kathryn M. Moore, "The Structure of Presidents' and Deans' Careers," Journal of Higher Education 54, September/October 1983, p. 501.

[2]Thomas H. Maher, "Assessing Candidates: There Are Better Ways," AAHE Bulletin 35 (May 1983), p. 12.

[3]Chronicle of Higher Education (April 22, 1987), p. 14 column 1.

[4]John F. Harvey and Mary Parr, "University Library Search and Screen Committees," College and Research Libraries 37, July 1976, 347-355.

[5]Paul Metz, "Administrative Succession in the Academic Library," College and Research Libraries 39, September 1978, 358-365.

[6]William Fisher, "Use of Selection Committees by California Academic Libraries," Journal of Academic Librarianship 10, May 1984, 94-99.

[7]Albert F. Maag, "Design of the Library Director Interview: The Candidate's Perspective," College and Research Libraries, March 1980, 112-121.

[8]Arthur M. McAnally and Robert M. Downs, "The Changing Role of Directors of University Libraries," College and Research Libraries, March 1973, 103-125.

[9]Susan A. Lee, "Conflict and Ambiguity in the Role of the Academic Library Director," College and Research Libraries, September 1977, 396-403.

[10]Paul Metz, "The Role of the Academic Library Director," Journal of Academic Librarianship 5, July 1979, 148-152.

[11]Sandra A. Neville, "Academic Libraries at the Mid-Life Transition," Journal of Academic Librarianship 6, March 1980, 20-23.

[12]Miriam A. Drake, "Managing Innovation in Academic Libraries," College and Research Libraries 40, November 1979, 503-510.

[13]John N. DePew and Anne Marie Allison, "Factors Affecting Academic Library Administration, 1976-1981," Journal of Library Administration 5 (Summer 1984), 13-57.

[14]W. L. Cohn, "Overview of ARL Directors, 1933-1973," College and Research Libraries 37, March 1976, 137-144.

[15]Jerry L. Parsons, "Characteristics of Research Library Directors, 1958 and 1973," Wilson Library Bulletin 50, April 1976, 613-617.

[16]DePew and Allison, p. 13-57.

[17]Ronald Dale Karr, "The Changing Profile of University Library Directors, 1966-1981," College and Research Libraries 45 (July 1984): 285.

[18]Scott Heller, "Though Many Search Firms Have Ties to Business World, Their Candidates for College Jobs Are Usually Academics," Chronicle of Higher Education 33, April 22, 1987, p. 14.

[19]Scott Heller, p. 14.

[20]Scott Heller, "A Headhunter Helps Dartmouth--and Many Others--Find A New President," Chronicle of Higher Education 33, April 22, 1987, p. 1.

[21]J. A. Rodman and M. R. Dingerson, "University Hiring Practices for Academic Administrators," Journal of the College and University Personnel Association 37, Summer 1986, 24-30.

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APPENDIX A: Sample Letter to Chief Executive Officer

CLARION UNIVERSITY
of Pennsylvania
Clarion, Pennsylvania 16214 (814) 226-2000

September 25, 1986

Dear Dr.

I am writing to seek your support and assistance for a study which is being conducted jointly by Dr. George C. Newman (Director of Libraries at the State University College of New York at Buffalo) and me. Our research is being funded by the Council on Library Resources. The purpose of our study is to examine the selection process used by universities to fill the position of university librarian. We are interested in institutions which have selected a new chief librarian in the past two years. A brief description of the project is attached.

Our method for collecting data suggests that we interview the President of the university, chairperson of the selection committee, available members of the selection committee, chairperson of the library committee, university affirmative action officer, and the person to whom the university librarian reports. These interviews are scheduled to take approximately 30 minutes each.

If your University is interested in cooperating with this study, I would appreciate the name of someone on your staff whom I may contact to obtain the names of the individuals identified above, as well as to establish appropriate times and dates for interviews. We are planning to spend three days on each campus conducting this survey. We can assure you that you and your staff will not be required to assist in this study other than to provide time and availability for the interview. All responses will, of course, remain confidential, and the identity of participating institutions and individuals will not be revealed in any way.

Thank you for considering our request. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely yours,

Ruth J. Person, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Library Science
166 Carlson Building

APPENDIX B: Basic Questionnaire Outline

BASIC QUESTIONNAIRE OUTLINE

1. How were persons selected to serve on the search committee to find a new university librarian?

2. What previous experience did each committee member have with search/screen processes?

3. What were the individual responsiblities of the members of the search committees? What were the tasks of the chairperson?

4. Was the selection committee given specific directions by the library, the administration, Board of Trustees or any other group? If so, what were they and how did they impact on the selection process?

5. Could you describe the amount of work that was necessary to conduct the search? How long did the search process take before a candidate was selected and accepted?

6. Did the search committee use any outside sources to aid in the selection, such as consultants or other higher education experts?

7. During the selection process was distinction made between the search and the screen procedures? Were applicants screened from correspondence by the personnel office or committee chairperson before they were evaluated by the selection committee?

8. Did the selection committee made distinctions between applicants who applied for the position and applicants who were nominated?

9. Did the selection committee require that all applicants meet a specific set of requirements in order to be accepted to the screening phase of the search? If so, what were they? How many applicants were there, and how many of those met these requirements?

10. How did the selection process allow for the guarantee of fair and equal employment and affirmative action?

11. What kind of previous library experience was the university librarian expected to possess?

12. Why was this particular person chosen to be the new university librarian?

13. Was any effort made on the part of the search committee to study previous selection processes or maintain information on this particular selection?

14. How much deliberation took place in the selection of a new university librarian on whether the applicant was to be from inside or outside the university?

15. How informed about academic librarianship was the search committee?

16. How long were the final candidates on campus?

17. What pre-interview information was sent to candidates?

18. What provisions were made for candidates to become acquainted with the community?

19. What special problems were encountered in the selection process?